

Article 11 -- No Title: We Are In Too Deep in Asia and Africa We Are In Too Deep in Asia and Africa

By FRANK CHURCH

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AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT—It is too much, in too many places, where it is self-defeating, the author maintains. As a prime example, he cites South Vietnam (above, a U. S. adviser, watched by Vietnamese, holds a wire tied to a volunteer crawling into a tunnel suspected of being a guerrilla hideout). Berlin (right), Senator Church says, worked, because Americans and Europeans recognized a common threat. The Congo (far right, refugees rescued from rebel territory by a U. S. airlift) has only made us enemies all over Africa.

“WE can never again stand aside prideful in isolation.” So spoke Lyndon B. Johnson at his inauguration, and all Americans should agree. Head-in-the-sand isolationism died a generation ago. The American retaliatory bombing of North Vietnam last week was dramatic evidence of our present-day stand—and of the worldwide scope of our involvement.

But the pendulum of our foreign policy can swing from one extreme to the other. (I write here as one who is a confirmed internationalist, a supporter of the United Nations, of sensible foreign aid and of the Peace Corps.)

Once we thought that anything which happened abroad was none of our business; now we evidently think that everything which happens abroad has become our business. In the span of 30 years, an excess of isolationism has been transformed into an excess of interventionism.

Since the days of the Marshall Plan, the United States has constantly expanded the scope of its commitments to foreign governments. From Western Europe we have moved into Africa, the Middle East and the Far East, until our involvement has become global. Our troops are now stationed in no fewer than 30 countries; we are pledged to defend 42, and we are extending aid, in one form or another, to nearly 100 nations. As Walter Lippmann wrote recently: “We have become grossly over-extended in regions where we have no primary vital interest. We have scattered our assistance to such a degree that we help everybody a little and nobody enough.”

Why have we spread ourselves so thin? What compulsion draws us ever deeper into the internal affairs of so many countries in Africa and Asia, having so remote a connection with the vital interests of the United States?

THE answer, I think, stems from our intensely ideological view of the cold war. We have come to treat “Communism,” regardless of what form it may take in any given country, as the enemy. We fancy ourselves as guardian of the “free” world, though most of it is not free, and never has been.

We seek to immunize this world against further Communist infection through massive injections of American aid and, wherever necessary, through direct American intervention. Such a vast undertaking has at least two defects: First, it exceeds our

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national capability; second, among the newly emerging nations, where the specter of Western imperialism is dreaded more than Communism, such a policy can be self-defeating. As a seasoned, friendly foreign diplomat recently put it: "The United States is getting involved in situations where no one—not even a nation of saints—would be welcome."

This is not to say that we should write off Africa or Asia. It is to say that a foreign policy of intervention, which was right for Western Europe, is likely to be wrong for those continents which have just thrown off European rule.

To begin with, the stakes in Europe were different. Had so rich an industrial prize as Western Europe ever fallen into Russian hands, the actual balance of power in the world would have shifted from our favor to the Soviet Union's. We were obliged to regard the dividing line in Europe as though it were an American frontier,

to commit our nuclear arsenal to its defense, and to station an army of American troops in West Germany as "trip-wire" evidence of our determination to defend that country as though it were our own. No nation goes this far unless its very survival hangs in the balance.

Even so, our intervention in Europe would not have succeeded without a strong mutual purpose. We were welcomed back to war-devastated Europe in 1945 to be a nuclear sentinel against further Russian aggression. It was the expansion of hostile Russian power which summoned us, not the color of the Red banner, or our distaste for the way of life inside the Soviet Union. There was no confusion among the NATO allies as to the identity of the enemy. As long as the Russian threat remained imminent, we all faced in the same direction, united by a single will.

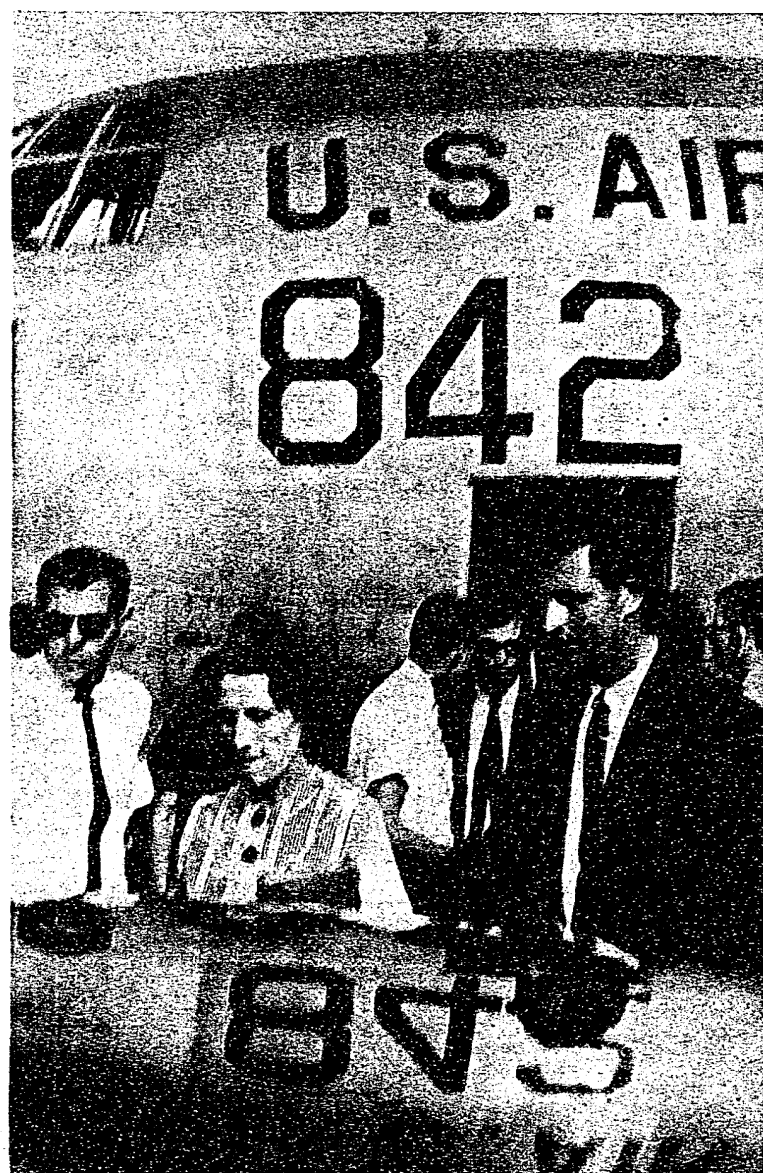
There was still another reason for the success of our intervention in

Europe—a condition so obvious that it is often overlooked, and yet so fundamental that its absence in Africa and Asia accounts for most of our setbacks on those continents. In Europe, we stood among people with whom we shared a common ancestry, whose political and economic systems were similar to our own, and whose traditional values derived from the same mainstream of historical experience that we call Western civilization. This cultural bond meant that most Europeans generally shared our aims and our point of view.

BUT if the inhabitants of Western Europe tend to see the world as we do, as a global arena in which "free" people are arrayed against "Communists," it does not follow that Africans and Asians share this view. They see the world quite differently. They have been participants in a different revolution, more potent and wide-

spread than the Communist brand—a revolution foreshadowed, two centuries ago, by the American War for Independence and whipped into flame by Woodrow Wilson's ringing reaffirmation of the right of self-determination. Neither Marx nor Lenin fathered the revolt against colonialism, and we need not permit their successors, in Moscow or Peking, to exploit the colonial issue to Communist advantage.

To avoid this, we must understand that for most Africans and Asians our concept of self-government and individual freedom is totally unreal, having never been experienced. In many, if not most, of these emergent lands, it is capitalism, not Communism, which is the hated word. The very term evokes images of the old colonial plantation and white supremacy. Furthermore, any attempt to acquaint Africa and Asia with the miracles of modern capitalism, as witnessed in (Continued on Page 84)



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such places as the United States, Western Europe and Japan, is relatively meaningless. The underdeveloped world lacks the private capital with which to industrialize. Government is often the only source available to underwrite development programs. Thus popular repugnance to capitalism combines with economic necessity to cause most of the new governments in Africa and Asia to proclaim themselves Socialist states.

BECAUSE these facts are so well known, it puzzles me that American foreign policy in Africa and Asia has not been tied to them. We have plunged into these former colonial regions as though we had been designated on high to act as trustee in bankruptcy for the broken empires.

First of all, we strained relations by trying to induce governments to line up with us in the cold war, a struggle in which few felt any real interest. Forgetting that we ourselves had insisted upon our right to stay neutral for most of our history, we assailed "neutralism" as a kind of Communist trick. Later, having painfully learned that cold-war neutrality always served as a badge of independence, and sometimes even as an umbrella for it, we changed tune, but, even then, we kept on administering our aid program in ways designed to freeze out the Russians and Chinese.

In regions craving aid from any source, our freeze-out policy was bound to give rise to cries of undue interference. Soon, African and Asian governments were demanding aid "without strings attached," while accusing the United States of practicing "neocolonialism." Worse still, sensing that we feared competition from Communist sources, many a government craftily raised the ante on us, threatening to go to the Reds for help if we failed to meet some new demand.

Neither the Agency for International Development nor the State Department itself will acknowledge submitting to this sort of diplomatic blackmail in the handling of our foreign aid program. But I have no doubt about it. Too often I have questioned an American ambassador about a misfit project in some forlorn little country, only to be told: "If we hadn't done it, the Russians would have been asked." Knuckling under to such crude pressures has caused our prestige to go down, even as our costs have gone up.

Worst of all, we have permitted ourselves to be drawn into the internal political affairs of so many African and

Asian countries that anti-American feeling is rising at an alarming rate. Our embassies are subjected to increasingly frequent attacks, our information libraries are sacked, and demagogues from Cairo to Jakarta court popular favor by rebuking us. Afro-Asian delegates at the U.N. castigate us with words of extraordinary violence. Clearly, the policy of intervening too much in the volatile ex-colonial regions of Africa and Asia is backfiring on the United States.

Much of this could have been avoided. I visited Africa in 1960, immediately after John F. Kennedy's election, in company with two of my col-

But we have not yet managed to harness our zeal. Rational restraint gives way to emotional involvement, which, in turn, leads to more intervention. Fortunately, the Russians have made the same mistake in Africa, and now the Chinese seem eager to repeat it. Here are two examples, one Russian, one American, which constitute, in my judgment, showcase illustrations of how not to conduct a winning foreign policy in Africa:

SIX years ago, Nikita Khrushchev scurried to the rescue of Sékou Touré, strongman of Guinea, after this little West African country had been stripped bare by the departing

the glories of free enterprise. He was to say it was their business, not ours, to choose the system they preferred; that we were interested only in helping them, in a modest way, with some of their problems of human suffering. Kennedy felt that if we did not press too hard Guinea would soon discover the Russians were not 9 feet tall.

And so it happened. It was not long before Guinea began to resent the heavy-handed interference of the Russians. Relations became so strained that the Soviet ambassador was declared *persona non grata*, and ordered to leave the country. Meanwhile, Guinea began to reassume control over her own course. Today, her attitude toward the United States is much improved, and her ties with the West are growing again.

THE mistake of too much intervention, which the Russians made in Guinea, we seem determined to duplicate in the Congo. Africans wonder why the United States, having no historic, economic or security interests in the Congo, should so involve itself in that country's civil war. I also wonder why.

I know, of course, that the State Department regards the Congo rebels as a Communist front. Yet our own envoy in Stanleyville, whose long agony with the rebels was climaxed when they forced him to eat an American flag, declared after his rescue that he believed the rebellion to be purely African, not Communist, in character. His statement met a response of stony silence from the American press.

The fact is that our embrace with Moise Tshombe is popular in the United States. We see him as a vociferous anti-Communist. What matters, however, is how the Africans see him. And African animosity toward Tshombe is so intense that he is barred from even associating with other African leaders, having been physically excluded from their meetings. To them, he is the African equivalent of an Uncle Tom, a puppet of the imperialists who uses white mercenaries to subdue his own countrymen. I doubt that Tshombe will ever win African acceptance. Our involvement with him serves only to turn the tide of African opinion increasingly against us.

REGRETTABLY, we are creating similar problems for ourselves in Asia by the same excess of interventionism. Pakistan is a classic example. At fantastic cost, we undertook to enlarge and modernize the armed forces of Pakistan. Our theory was that this assistance

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INSPECTION TOUR—Senator Church, traveling with a Foreign Relations Committee group, meets U.S. airmen in South Vietnam. At left, Senator Gale W. McGee, Wyoming Democrat.

leagues and the President's younger brother, Ted. Whenever our presence became known eager crowds would gather to shout: "Kennedy! Kennedy!" Word had spread through Africa that the newly elected President of the United States had, as a Senator in 1957, spoken up for Algeria in her war for independence against France. For the first time, our country was being identified, by Arabs and blacks alike, with legitimate African aspirations. Opportunity was beckoning us.

If we had continued to champion African nationalism, the cause that counts with the people; if we had declared ourselves strongly in favor of rightful independence for the Portuguese territories, the flaming issue in Africa today; if we had held ourselves at arm's length from the shifting factional fights for power within the seething young African countries, regardless of the labels chosen to solicit outside support, I have no doubt that our influence in Africa would have kept on growing.

French. It seemed a perfect marriage, since the Guinean leaders, raised in the radical tradition of the French labor movement, were Marxists anyway, and anxious to establish a model Marxist state.

When I arrived in Conakry, the country's capital, in December, 1960, Guinea had taken on all the appearances of a satellite. The Government had been persuaded to abandon the franc, in order to impede further trade with the West, and the entire economy seemed welded into the Red bloc. Communist advisers sat beside every Government minister. Numerous Red-donated projects were under construction, including a big printing plant, and the place swarmed with Communist technicians, transplanted from countries behind the Iron Curtain. Guinea had plainly been taken over.

Into this captured country, President Kennedy sent a young ambassador, William Atwood. His instructions were to play it cool. He was not to lecture the Guinean dictator on the virtues of democracy, or belabor his commissars with

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would bolster the country's defenses against Russia, but it was India, contesting with Pakistan over Kashmir, which felt threatened.

Still, we persisted. After all, wasn't Mohammed Ayub Khan, that strapping, Sandhurst-educated army man, a ruddy good chap? He had appeared before a joint session of the Congress, and addressed us in the reassuring accents of a British country squire. On the Communist issue the Indians seemed much too conciliatory, but we felt sure Ayub Khan could be depended upon, come what may. He himself said so. To the Congress, he intoned: "Let me tell you that if there is real trouble there is no other country in Asia on whom you will be able to count. The only people who will stand by you are the people of Pakistan."

That is past history now. Having used us for his purpose, Ayub Khan was the first to offer the olive branch to Red China when India was attacked. Our fervent courtship of Pakistan only lost us favor there. In the recent elections, the main issue between the two Presidential candidates was who was the more anti-American; Ayub Khan won.

TO the case against excessive American intervention in Africa and Asia the State Department has a stock answer: The Communists won't let us quit. South Vietnam is pointed to as the proof of our dilemma. If we permit the Vietcong to overthrow the Saigon Government, then the gates are open, so the argument goes, to successful Communist subversion of all the other governments in Southeast Asia.

But the hard fact is that there are limits to what we can do in helping any Asian government surmount a Communist uprising. If the people themselves will not support the government in power, we cannot save it. We can give arms, money, food and supplies, but the outcome will depend, in the final analysis, upon the government helped, and the extent to which the people are willing to rally behind it.

The Saigon Government is losing its war, not for lack of equipment, but for lack of internal cohesion. The Vietcong grow stronger, not because they are better supplied than Saigon, but because of their will to fight. Massive American intervention is a heavy cross for Saigon to bear. People who fought so long and hard to rid their country of the white man's rule are not likely to draw much distinction between French and American uniforms, however differently we conceive our purpose for being there. A drastic reduction in American

personnel quartered in Saigon would help, if it is not already too late.

As to the other governments in Southeast Asia, they are not so many dominoes in a row. They differ, one from another, in popular support, and in capacity to resist Communist subversion. We will help them most by keeping our distance, extending aid at arm's length.

IF we have a reason for being in the Orient, it is not that of fashioning Asian governments. It is not Communism, as such, which accounts for our presence in the Far East, but rather the containment of Peking. This can be best accomplished if China is ringed with stable, independent governments which refuse to be the pawns of Chinese ambition. As Yugoslavia has proved in Europe with respect to Russia, even a Communist government can play such a role.

It would be to our national advantage, then, to seek an international agreement for the neutralization of the whole great region that used to be French Indochina. The transitional phase of such a settlement might be policed by the United Nations, or by a special high commission set up to preside over a cease-fire in South Vietnam, to supervise the withdrawal of all foreign troops, and to maintain order while a broad-based, independent and unaligned new government is formed by the Vietnamese themselves.

The neutrality of the whole region would be guaranteed by the signatories to the international agreement. Thus the military might of the United States would remain available as a deterrent against Chinese aggression from the north, which is—or ought to be—the governing objective of our policy in Southeast Asia anyway.

In like manner, we may find it in our national interest to pledge ourselves to the defense of India, or some other Asian government, that they might avoid the need for developing nuclear shields of their own against China, while we avoid the dangers of further nuclear proliferation. This kind of guarantee, which lies within our capability, would preclude a power vacuum in Asia, so feared by those who defend our present policy. If this kind of defense commitment is adequate to deter a Chinese attack upon, say, India, it ought to suffice for Southeast Asia as well.

To those who object that such a policy will fail to protect against growing Chinese influence within such countries as Laos, Cambodia, Burma or Vietnam, brought on by intensified Communist activity, I submit that the scoreboard on our present policy of direct intervention in Southeast Asia shows we are now losing this

game, Burma and Cambodia, though both non-Communist governments, have been moving steadily closer to China. Laos is in limbo, after an American involvement, at heavy cost, in that country's internal affairs turned sour. The war in Vietnam, despite Saigon's preponderant military advantage, is going from bad to worse.

Our obsession with Communism, our inclination to meddle too much, our propensity to intervene too far, all are adding to the thrust of Communist subversion in Southeast Asia. In an area where China has been feared and resisted for centuries she now can pose as champion of Asia for the Asians, defying the United States in the name of opposing the revival of Western imperialism.

Chou En-lai had reason to rub his hands with glee when he said recently to a foreign visitor: "Once we worried about Southeast Asia. We don't any more. The Americans are rapidly solving our problems for us."

IT is not easy for a nation to change course. Solemn commitments, once given, must be kept. Nor will it ever again be possible for the United States to seek refuge within some happy hunting ground of our own choosing.

But it is mandatory that we fix foreign policy goals which are not beyond our reach; that we observe priorities which correspond with our real national interests; that we concern ourselves less with other people's ideologies, and that we adopt techniques which are sensitive to, and compatible with, the prevailing sentiment of the people in each great region of the world. Measured by these criteria, we are too deeply involved in the internal affairs of the emerging nations in Africa and Asia.

I believe that President Johnson intends, in a prudent and responsible way, to redress the balance. His emphasis on attending to the neglected problems at home is sensible. The long-run influence we exert abroad will hinge, in large measure, upon the kind of society we build in our own land.

In any reappraisal of American foreign policy in the underdeveloped world, so recently freed from colonial bondage, we would do well to recall the wise words of President Kennedy, spoken in November, 1961. "We must face the fact," he said, "that the United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, that we cannot always impose our will on the other 94 per cent of mankind, that we cannot right every wrong or reverse every adversity, and that, therefore, there cannot be an American solution to every world problem."